



Dear Administrator,

When I first took on the role of principal for Attucks Middle School, one of my first goals was to establish a debate program for our students. Luckily for me, our school district has an amazing debate community which joined together to create the Broward Debate Initiative. With help from the NSDA, Broward County Public Schools has made speech and debate a formal part of every middle and high school across Broward with more and more elementary schools coming on board each year. The ability to communicate effectively across cultures is one of the most sought after skills of the 21st century workforce and that is what a formal speech and debate program teaches. When our district endured a great tragedy this past February, our students were able to so eloquently express their anger and frustrations through the media in part because of their experiences in these programs.

Beyond public speaking, participating in debate activities teaches students to look at issues from multiple perspectives, engage in the democratic process, seek answers from reliable and unbiased sources, and most of all, it requires them to think critically about issues and form their own informed opinions about the facts. When I think about the current state of our great nation, I can't help but think that we could all benefit from taking a speech and debate class. The ability to disagree with someone on issues in an intelligent manner, without resorting to personal attacks, alternative facts, or "fake news" is one that is critically necessary today. When students are forced to argue both sides of an issue, they are forced to see the values and evidence in support of each argument. They are obligated to get out of their box and passionately argue a perspective they may not agree with personally. This activity opens minds and develops a deeper understanding of the large societal issues we face. As an educator, I can only hope this will lead to an ability to compromise and build consensus in the future.

As the principal of Attucks Middle School, I wholeheartedly support the efforts of the NSDA and the Broward Debate Initiative because the result speaks for itself! Speech and debate participants do better academically across the board. They become engaged, active participants in their education and in their community. Our school has seen great improvements in student culture and spirit since we started our program, and I would highly recommend joining the NSDA to any administrator looking to make a positive impact on school culture and academic performance.



Sincerely,

*Errol A Evans*

**Errol A. Evans**  
2018 NSDA Middle School Administrator of the Year  
Attucks Middle School, Florida

Find this and other letters of advocacy on our website:  
[www.speechanddebate.org/resources](http://www.speechanddebate.org/resources)